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A FLORENTINE REVERY



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FIRST CLOISTER, FLORENCE SAN MARCO

A Florentine Revery

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The following pages lay no claim to the character of exact history. The aim has been to give pictorial expression to certain significant phases and prominent personalities in the life of a famous city. The dates here assumed are more or less arbitrary and the sequence of events somewhat simplified. In the interest of pictorial completeness conjecture has been freely admitted to fill the inevitable void of the historic record. All this, it is hoped, is consistent with that essential truth which, if respected, may legitimately be clothed in such historic accidents as we will.

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From the visitor's seat on the ramparts of old Fiesole the traveler looks out upon one of the most suggestive scenes in Italy. Around him are the relics of the much metamorphosed ancient Etruscan city. Here are still the huge stones that were moss grown when the she wolf was suckling Romulus. The open square a few yards below, down the steep path, is the ancient forum or market, adjoined by the Roman theatre, the mediaeval cathedral, and the very modern statues of Victor Emanuel and Garibaldi. For Fiesole covers well nigh the whole span of history, and no age of stirring achievement has failed to leave its memorial.

But it is not these nearer surroundings that first challenge attention. Beyond the battlement the eye ranges over one of the most remarkable views in Europe. It is not merely that the view is enchanting, though this is indubitable. The view is unique in all Italy if not in all Europe. A broad, saucer shaped depression, perhaps forty miles in diameter, and bounded by a remarkably regular rim of hills extends before us, the whole clothed in richest verdure and enlivened by flashes from the gleaming

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river. In the center, huddled close, lies Florence, its domes and towers familiar even to the stranger. From a dozen hilltops rise the crenellated towers of ancient castles or petty baronial seats. And scattered far and wide from the city's walls out to the very saucer's rim gleam the white walls of Tuscan villas, their sentinel cypresses darkly outlined against the grey green of the olive clad hills.

Our first impression is one of perfect harmony. This is Italy, the Italy of our dreams. All is as it should be; no part that could be spared; none that would not miss the rest. The impression is not one to be needlessly disturbed. The mood of simple enjoyment may well be indulged indefinitely. For this fusion of old and new, this harmonizing of implacable systems, this supreme synthesis is the most noteworthy of all facts here suggested.

But sooner or later this sense of harmonious unity gives place to more detailed and puzzling impressions. This is Italy, we were saying, but now that we reflect, it is profoundly unlike the Italy that we have traversed from Naples or Brindisi up to the crest of the Apennines. There lies Florence, accessible, peaceful, and convenient, in the center of the beautiful valley of which it is at once the creation and the mistress. What more natural? But recalling what we have seen, what other city is so situated? Where were the cities that we passed on our journey hither? There is Cassino which looks down upon us as from an eagle's nest. There are Alatri and

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Anagni and Palestrina, ancient rivals of Rome, all perched upon hilltops miles from the railway stations that now bear their names. There is Orvieto upon her isolated table rock that falls sheer away on every side, a city approached by miles of toilsomely winding road, or more conveniently by the modern funicular railway. There is Chiusi, the ancient Clusium, where the mighty Lars Porsena held sway, a city so high and far away that the hurried traveler misses it altogether and takes the cluster of buildings around the railway station for the home of the redoubtable chieftain. There are Cortona and Siena, and Perugia, and Assisi, and Spello, and Spoleto, and Terni,—the list is endless. These cities do not nestle conveniently in the valleys, easy of access and comfortable. They crown the distant hilltops, close shut within cyclopean walls, infinitely picturesque, but to the last degree inconvenient, suspicious and unneighborly. Even Rome, situated in the midst of her broad campagna and unprotected by her distant circle of mountains, is but a seeming exception. Her low situation and comparatively easy modern grades quite conceal her ancient topography. When the primitive folk who were attracted here by the traffic of the Tiber located their scattered settlement on the seven hills, these spurs and fragments of the ancient plateau were separated by well high impassable chasms which made them almost as impregnable as Orvieto, though less resistant to later levelling. Decidedly the typical Italian city is

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a hill city, inconvenient, inaccessible, and afraid.

And here below lies Florence in the midst of her smiling valley, her level plain but a few yards above the neighboring sea, and not a hill within her ancient limits the height of a man's statue. Nature offers her not the slightest protection. Even the shallow Arno runs straight past and refuses to encircle the town. Florence was located with no thought of danger or provision for defense.

And now that we reflect, we are reminded that the place where we are sitting upon the stone bench offers precisely the advantages which the Italians seem everywhere else to have chosen. A steep hill falling away abruptly on every side, but with sufficient building space for a crowded ancient city, a higher portion for the indispensable citadel, and a depression or saddle for the necessary market place, it needed but moderate fortifications of the ancient type to render it impregnable.

It was an ideal site for a city that should dominate the fair plain below. Nay, the site was chosen and the city that was built there did dominate the plain for centuries before the first tower rose on the banks of the Arno. It is Fiesole that is the true Italian city, the counterpart of a hundred others that from their hilltops have watched the growth and the crumbling of empires for the last three thousand years. It is Florence that is the enigma, a city that had scarce its like in the whole peninsula until these modern times.

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But this is not the only thing in the scene before us that calls for explanation. Where else in Italy do we see a broad expanse of valley dotted with villas and country seats as we do here? It is all so perfectly as it should be that we do not at first feel moved to question. But the question once raised, we recall that other valleys are not like this. From the walls of Perugia or Siena we look across to other hilltop cities, but isolated homes are few in the plain below. Farther south they vanish altogether, or if found at all they are of most recent origin. What traveler in Italy has not heard the query: "Where do the people live who till these fields and tend these vines?" And the answer is always that they live up in the walled towns on the distant hilltops, daily toiling up and down to their work in the distant fields and vineyards. But here it is not so. The husbandman lives among his vines and the proprietor upon his estate, and has lived there for many generations. It is well, but why here and not elsewhere?

Our panorama from high perched Fiesole is therefore not merely beautiful and picturesque. It is plainly full of meaning to those who reflect upon its unique features. The Etruscan walls, the city on the Arno, the towering castles, and the scattered villas have each their own significance and stand as the expressive symbols of different epochs of civilization. In their day they have been bitter rivals and have drenched the land in blood for the triumph

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or the maintenance of that which they represent. This fair Tuscan plain is a palimpsest, a parchment on which age after age has written its story, each effacing or obscuring that which was before. Can we decipher the half-obliterated text? Let us begin with the earliest record.

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I

The spell is woven and the later records are effaced. The city by the Arno, the castles on the hilltops, the villas with their cypresses and their vines have faded. The olive has but begun its progress up the long slopes which are still dark with the native oak and give to primitive husbandry but a limited domain. Only the mountains are here and the broad plain and the snatches of sunlit river.

But Fiesole is here already, firmly seated upon her convenient hilltop, the same and yet different. No cathedral or bell tower rises behind the market place. Even the theatre is not yet, and in the place of the familiar monastery with its black gowned friars rises an imposing citadel in whose walls we recognize the counterpart of the great stones already familiar. Lower walls surround the city, and their ponderous metal covered gates groan on huge pivots as they swing to and fro at rise and set of sun, or more hastily when danger threatens, a possibility evidently contemplated by the sentinels who pace the ramparts. Through the gateway passes the husbandman down the rugged path to his distant fields, meeting the merchant with the wares of distant Hellas or the laden asses bringing home the

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produce of the fields. Cattle and sheep and goats add to the motley procession.

There are not wanting signs of opulence and good taste inside the guarded walls. Houses may be poor and streets narrow and mean, but there is beauty and cunning in their golden jewels and the well built walls and imposing gateways testify to taste as well as to power and pride. The dead, too, are provided with spacious tombs where sculptured angels with inverted torch guard their funeral urns, and banquets depicted upon the walls invite their spirits to refreshment. Nor are there wanting those mysterious symbols of the written word which alone can rescue men's virtues and deeds from oblivion. For the Etruscan is no barbarian, but the proud peer of those who are just now building their Parthenon and celebrating their triumph over the devouring east. The cunning wares of the Greek workshop have found in him not only their best customer but their cleverest imitator, the skill of the Etruscan craftsmen baffling the very elect. His wise men, too, are skilled in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and Egyptian wares are among his possessions.

But above all the Etruscan stands for mastery and the strong right arm. His strongholds are not the work of weaklings. They bear the stamp, not of puny elegance, but of energy and purpose. He has reached his own solution of the great human problem, a solution which he regards with complacency, perhaps with a sense of finality. Man was

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a hunted animal exposed to ever recurring dangers and constant terrors. He has built him cities of refuge where he may sleep in peace and to which he may run to cover from the marauder. The no-man's-land between necessarily retains something of its old time perils. What reasonable man would ask that the whole countryside be pacified? What would become of the virtues of hardihood and cunning if everything were safe? But if men must face these dangers manfully as behooves those who engage in the dangerous business of living, it is reassuring to know that the sentinel is watching from his tower and that if danger nears, the city will afford him succor or refuge according to his need.

It is a spotty civilization. The arts and the graces, flowers of peace, are found only under hot-house shelter, biding the time when a more genial sun will permit them to cover the land and fill the valley with their perfume.

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II

Half a millennium has passed and again we stand on the walls of Fiesole. There is change, yet less of change, it would seem, than might be expected from these momentous centuries. The citadel, the walls, the market, all are there and little modified, yet in disrepair and seemingly less regarded. There is no lookout in the watch tower and the massive gateway serves only the purposes of the publican. The market is still frequented, but more by idlers than by buyers and traffic in the varied wares is local and petty. The city would seem to have prospered, for it boasts a new theatre and other public buildings, and new homes such as even an Etruscan lord never knew. And amazing to relate, these are built outside the walls, some of them far down the slope and quite beyond the reach of the city's protection.

Perhaps the most noteworthy change is in the citizens themselves when once we become conscious of it. They are not afraid, yet they lack the old-time resoluteness and self confidence. Though well-to-do, they give little sign of enterprise or initiative, like men accustomed to follow rather than to lead, and prosperous by inheritance rather than by achievement. Their pride is in things ancestral and their

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cherished distinctions are based on tradition. Fiesole is of yesterday. We must look elsewhere for the men of today.

Now that we turn our gaze toward the valley, we become gradually conscious of other changes. Tillage has changed its character and become more general. Long white lines cross the plain which we discover to be roads definitely located and constructed with paved surface and crossing the streams by bridges instead of by fords. And most noteworthy of all, there is a new city built in the most incredible of places, on the flat land by the river. It is to this that we turn our attention.

It is not a large city—you can walk through it from wall to wall in seven or eight minutes—for it is of recent origin and it has not grown by conquest or spoliation. But it is enterprising and prosperous as its name, Florentia, the flourishing, aptly, if accidentally, implies. No wonder when we see the ease with which it is approached along the paved and level highways. It is not strange that the laden asses have forsaken the rugged path up to grim Fiesole and now drop their packs at the river market instead. It does not take us long to discover that energy and thrift have forsaken sleepy Fiesole and migrated to the bustling town on the banks of the Arno. The Fiesolans are uneasily conscious that the change is to their disadvantage and that the candlestick has been removed from its place. They note the wealth of the upstart rival, compare its

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new theater with their own, and shake their heads with envious disapproval at its arena, and gladiatorial shows. Florentia is parvenu. It has no traditions, no quality. Its population, of scattered and unknown origin, has no lineage, no family. It is with due emphasis upon these heirloom values that these heirs of the ages watch the progress of the supplanter, for men are more disposed to boast of their possessions than to confess their losses.

All this and more is evident on acquaintance, but it does not solve our riddle. How comes it that there is a supplanted and a supplanter? How is it that there is a city on the river bank where of old it was axiomatic that no city could exist? Whence comes that new confidence that emboldens men to build their villas outside the walls and even at a distance from their protection? Whence these roads and this security unknown before?

The answer to these questions is to be found in a larger fact of which we are early and increasingly conscious. There is a big overshadowing something which is in all men's thoughts and which enters into all their calculations. Neither Fiesole nor the new Florentia are of a character to account for this new confidence, this new security, this new opulence. It is quickly apparent that they are but tiny meshes in a vast net which some mighty hand has flung over a turbulent world. These roads that the eye follows out toward the valley's rim lead over and beyond, to something else, to something bigger.

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They bring to Florentia and to Fiesole alike not merely produce and cunning craftsmanship, but authority and guidance. Fiesole may look to Florentia, but Fiesole and Florentia alike look to Rome.

This is the supreme change which has been wrought in these five hundred years. Fiesole of old was all things to herself and to the little territory that sought shelter in the shadow of her walls. With Clusium and Cortona and the rest she had something of an understanding and there were rudimentary arrangements for cooperation in certain extreme emergencies, but these were sternly held in check, not to say vitiated, by a never failing jealousy. The ordering of daily life was local and its vision introspective. Neighborly relations were negative and based on the let-alone ideal. Hence the huddling in fortress towns, the imperfect tillage of surrounding fields and the scant protection of property and life by intermittent foray and reprisal. It was a system that developed hardihood and self-reliance, virtues according to its needs, as every system does, virtues far less in evidence in the later reposeful Fiesole or bustling Florentia. Man kept his hand on the sword hilt, and there was the look of a hunted thing on the face of civilization.

Rome has changed all that. Gradually as her dominion has become assured, she has not only subdued the strong places to her will, but she has evolved that far reaching organization which has brought the no-man's-land under orderly adminis-

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tration. It is not so much her greater physical power as it is the infinitely more effective instruments through which that power is exercised. Her roads traverse the mountains, her bridges span the rivers, and her galleys cross the seas. Her police patrols, her courts, her laws and her administrative tradition have made banditry unprofitable and piracy unsafe.

It is a new thing under the sun, this policing of a whole land and the establishment of security from sea to sea. If the world ever saw its like before the memory of it has passed away. Guided by no tradition, inspired by no precedent, Rome has conceived and executed the mighty task. We can hardly exaggerate the importance of the achievement or honor too highly the people who have thus tamed our world. The hill cities have become unnecessary now and their walls more of a hindrance than a help. Rome has herself signalized the advent of a happier time by tearing down the walls that had once been her reliance, judging them to be no longer a protection, but a hindrance to her growth. Her splendid expansion across the broad campagna with its far flung line of gardens and villas is a challenge to the dwellers in walled cities to avail themselves of that freedom wherewith Rome has made them free. Were it not for that inertia which so far exceeds all other factors in determining the ways of men, the hill cities, already obsolete, would be forsaken. But that conservatism which at once

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preserves our gains and impedes our progress, yields but slowly to the logic of events, and Florentia is a pioneer in inaugurating the new era. The outcome, however, seems not doubtful. If the Pax Romana endures, the hill towns will be given over to the owls and bats.

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III

But no. The hill towns endure, have endured for a thousand years since last we visited them in the spirit. Little changed they seem in the midst of a world that has undergone a melancholy transformation. Rome has walls again and her children huddle in palaces now become tenements, and her temples are in ruins. The campagna is a wilderness where buffaloes graze. Where once were gardens and palaces are shapeless heaps. The roads are gullied and overgrown with bush. No legions march to guard the far frontier where Norman William and Saxon Harold struggle for the abandoned domain. For Rome has passed and the Pax Romana is a memory.

How fares it with Val d'Arno and the cities of hill and plain? A glance suffices to show that they have not been exempt from the world's tribulation. Fiesole has found new reason for existence, but an existence without prosperity or power. A scanty population now dwells meanly within her patched up walls, seeking there safety from the prevailing violence. The villas without the walls are in ruins or replaced by rude castles. The theater is abandoned or devoted to ignoble uses. The wares in the market are of the simplest and garish gewgaws

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have displaced the signs of culture and taste. Only the temples are new, for Fiesole has placed her trust in other gods before whose symbols she bows with servile reliance on their talismanic power. If she still looks to Rome, it is from habit rather than with any hope of succor or guidance. Fiesole is thrown upon herself again, but not with her old time pride or power. She is no longer mistress of the broad valley which is now parceled out into petty fiefs ruled from a dozen different hilltops, each crowned by its castle or fortress house. Fiesole in her fallen estate is but one of the number, larger but hardly more powerful. Tillage is backward and the yield is meager. Worse still, there is lawlessness, and the sower does not always reap where he sowed. Life has become incredibly simple and unwillingly self-sufficing. A pallet of straw or rushes serves as the bed even of the lord of the manor. The coarse fare of his table is such as the neighboring fields supply. The sheep that graze in the neighborhood furnish the wool which is carded and spun and woven by the household for the household's use. Every hamlet has its cobbler, its carpenter, its mason, whose implements are fashioned by the local smith in the intervals between his tasks as armourer and farrier. There is the priest, of course, the keeper of the talismans and the weaver of incantations, and the friar, his ubiquitous associate, the two performing as may be with images and rites the functions of schoolmaster and physician. But of that manifold

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and far reaching life that had grown up under the Pax Romana, little remains. The broken statues and battered temples that remain as its witnesses are now woven about with folk tales and given out as the gift of wonder worker and magician.

Such communities offer scant encouragement to the merchant and purveyor of luxuries. The pack animals are few that make their way over the neglected roads, their owners evading or buying off the bandits that infest the way and satisfying the scarcely less rapacious gentry whose protection they are compelled to seek. Warily the traveler makes his way from castle to castle claiming the hospitality which can not be refused and not forgetting the gift which is its inevitable counterpart. Long standing custom has hardened into law. The gift has become a tax and the castle a toll gate. Great Rome has crumbled and these petty depotisms are the crumbs.

But though gone, Rome is not forgotten. The peace which she established was so beneficent, the world embracing mechanism of her administration was so wonderful, and her power was so imposing that the centuries during which these things endured have made of Rome an imperishable tradition. Gone but assuredly not perished. Somewhere that power, that world embracing authority, must still exist. Like Arthur of the Table Round, Rome must come again and resume her sway. Such is the instinct rather than the reasoned faith of these simple folk of the Middle Age. No rebels against authority,

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they, but seekers, prone to accept its token, like those who of old followed the star.

And Rome has come again, not, as of old, seated upon her seven hills, nor yet quite clothed with her old majesty, but strong handed and all subduing, out of the north, bearing the promise of order again and peace with its old time blessings. The promise has had scant fulfillment, and the authority established by this Rome of the north has brought but imperfect order and intermittent peace. But such authority as there is is largely of her creation. It is this reincarnated Rome that placed these lordlings in the castles and clothed them with their petty authority. As appointees of a foreigner they were originally strangers to Italy, largely German, and though they have forgotten their German speech and become assimilated into that people who have absorbed so many of their race before, they have never lost the proud distinction of their imperial appointment. They are Rome, the living embodiment of that authority that can never die and to which men look for peace and happiness. These men have neither the wealth of Rome nor her power nor her genius, but they have her tradition. They live meanly and by doubtful expedients. Their authority extends but a few furlongs from their doors. But nothing can obliterate the fact that they have the emperor's warrant, that they wear the livery of Rome.

But what of Florentia, that bud of promise that

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epitomized the Pax Romana? We have briefly overlooked the hopeful little town in our broader survey. It is not strange. Florentia is there, but she is not flourishing. The changes we have noted have borne hard on a town built for commerce rather than for defence. The return of lawlessness has destroyed her commerce, and despite her well built walls, there is little but inertia to account for her continued existence. In common with all other communities, she has to accept the rudimentary culture of a primitive agricultural community for the age knows no other, save in the secluded life of the cloister where a scant survival of art and letters is hibernating in hope of a coming summer. We know not by what stages the flourishing commercial city has been transformed into a sleepy agricultural village where cows graze in the abandoned places and country roads with mire and dust run past rude walls and dirty alleys to the petty margrave's castle. If "happy is that people that has no history" then Florence, as we must now learn to call her, has been exceptionally blessed, for there is no record of the great transformation. We can not err greatly, however, in picturing the change from enterprising growth to stagnation and decay. The paralysis of authority, the increase of lawlessness, the decline of commerce, the straitened life, the exodus of population, and the decay of culture, these are an inexorable sequence. There came a time when there were no more shows in the arena. Abandoned to miscella-

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neous uses, it became a market, a tenement, a stable, then a quarry and rubbish heap. So with the temples, the shrines of gods no longer revered. So with all else that changed conditions have rendered useless. It has been a time of sorry undoing.

There has been construction, too, but rude and simple, such as only a later age surfeited with elegance will be able to call beautiful. Houses are bare and comfortless, and even the churches in the building of which fear of the unseen powers prompts to man's utmost effort, are devoid of ornament and more akin to the fortress than the temple. From this simplification of life which has everywhere taken place, Florence is not exempt. She is one of the crumbs and not unlike the others.

And now again we will drop the curtain, leaving the generations to shift the scenery upon the stage.

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IV

It is difficult to see in the busy city before us the sleepy burg of two and a half centuries before. Though still a small city—you can walk all round it in a couple of hours—Florence has grown beyond recognition and the new walls are of much wider circuit than those we knew. Even so the city in its continuing growth crowds hard against them and is compelled to accommodate itself to narrow quarters. There are no waste spaces now, and the streets, often too narrow for two carts to pass, are grudgingly allowed only on the ground level. Projecting upper stories economize the previous space above and afford shade from the somewhat too ardent sun. The houses, built on surprisingly narrow foundations, rise to an imposing height and, as if that were not enough, they are surmounted by a tower half as big as themselves, square and plain and bare of ornament, but crowding menacingly to the front as if they needed no excuse for their existence. Their roofs, too, are not provided with cornices or overhanging eaves but are surmounted by crenellated battlements like the castles that we had previously noticed on the hilltops.

We wonder what such a house is like inside.

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Perhaps we can get a glimpse through the windows. But now that we look for the windows we notice for the first time that there are none which will serve our purpose. The lowest are from eight to twelve feet from the ground, and even so they are scarce large enough for cellar windows, and are barred with iron rods an inch thick, set upright and crosswise and close together. Higher up there are real windows, but still small and with substantial shutters that can be closed in the case of need. Even the door is barely large enough to admit a single person, and most forbiddingly ironclad. Perhaps we have struck the jail by accident. But no; they are all alike. Decidedly, the Florentine is prepared for emergencies.

The nature of these emergencies is made clear as we turn the corner. There is a clamor and a din of arms as well as of voices, between two groups who are ranged around two contestants armed to the teeth. There are bruises and cuts and fallen partisans, and finally, of course, a beaten party which falls back sullenly down a narrow street. We have scarce time to realize what is happening when the door of a high house opens, and the beaten leader backs into it. There is a rush of the victors to enter, a slamming of the door and a creaking of bolts, and meanwhile a shying of stones or a shower of boiling water from the top of the tall tower already referred to, and the baffled victor withdraws muttering and cursing.

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This astounding breach of the peace within the very walls piques our curiosity. Who are these brigands and how did they ever penetrate into the city? There are smiles at our ignorance, and we are assured that we have done the contestants grave injustice. They are not brigands but the heads of noble Florentine families maintaining the honor of their house and Florentine tradition. Within these stern dwellings there is peace, obedience, the will of a master, but between them there is feud, feud that none would deign to forgive or forget, and the streets are the inevitable scene of conflict.

But why this conflict? What is all the war about? The answer is not easy. We are told that it is of very long standing and that the sons grow up to fight because their fathers fought before them. The fighting is quite inevitable and for that matter, quite congenial, and just what it is about is of minor importance. To an outsider the real things do not seem so very important nor the important things so very real. At first we learn only that there are two great factions, each with its catch-word, Guelf and Ghibelline. The Guelfs are the party of the Pope who claims a sort of suzerainty over Florence, while the Ghibellines are the party of the Emperor whose shadowy claim to Florentine allegiance is in potential conflict with papal prerogative. Both parties are loud in their protestations of allegiance and implacable in their hostility, but it does not take us long to discover that with all their talk of

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the good emperor or the pope angelico who shall some day come and set things right, these warring factions are perfectly agreed on one point, namely, that they want no interference from these or anyone else. They want to be left alone to fight it out as they see fit. So long as pope and emperor do not take their rights too seriously, they can count on lusty partisanship from their respective parties, but woe to either if he attempts to meddle with Florentine affairs. There is one thing that every Florentine loves better than his party, better even than his feuds and his fightings, and that is Florence and her liberties. It is a strange combination, this primitive simplicity of household rule coping with the infinite restiveness of modern life. The new wine has been put into old bottles, and the bottles are ready to burst.

But our walk must go farther or it will leave us more puzzled than enlightened. A few steps bring us to a maze of streets packed with the busiest and cleverest artisans in the world. Here one is giving the last touches to an artistic copper vessel which without joints or solder he has fashioned from a single piece. Another is riveting a piece of armor, another engraving with infinite deftness a golden brooch. There are whole streets given over to cloth-dressers, who give work to the spinners and weavers and fullers and dyers in numberless back rooms and attics. There are smiths, and carvers of wood and gilders, and joiners, and fashioners of

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beautiful things in clay and wood and bronze and iron and gold, in marble from Carrara and alabaster from Volterra. Buyers throng the shops or congregate in the crowded markets, laying in stores of precious wares even for distant India or semi-barbarous Britain; and, strangest of all, they pay for their purchases in coins that do not have to be weighed, and which, bearing the stamp and seal of Florence, are called florins, that is short for Florentines.

As we watch the infinite dexterity of these artisans, we cannot but be impressed by their resoluteness and self-sufficiency. They never hesitate, fumble, or spoil. They work with automatic precision, as though they had fashioned the same thing and wrought the same design a hundred times before. The brain is as busy as the hand and does its part as easily and as well. There is no waiting for another to suggest or direct, no helplessness or dependence. From childhood up they have learned to think their own thoughts, to be self-sufficient, independent, and alert. And how plain it is that this habit of mind, once deeply implanted, will assert itself in other than industrial connections. A nation of tillers of the soil, or of factory hands and automatic machine stuffers, may tolerate a Caesar; a nation of artisans never. Will democracy survive the extinction of artisanship? There is nothing in history to warrant the hope.

This, then, is the new wine that is bursting the

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old bottles. Mediaeval Florence has awakened from her long sleep and has become the center of that modern life that we call industry. The great change has come about so naturally and started so unobtrusively that it is as difficult to locate its beginning as it is to find the seed which, germinating long ago, has become a great tree whose mighty roots have split the rock on which it grew. Somebody back in the sleepy old burg whose interests had scarcely extended hitherto beyond the adjoining fields, began to do something better than it had been done before. We do not know what or why. Perhaps it was a new discovery or invention, or maybe just a greater patience and a finer taste. Whether embodied in trade secret or in tradition, it persisted and the contagion spread. Soon it was rumored that a better finished cloth could be obtained in Florence than was produced elsewhere, and some came or sent to procure it. Emulation brought other buyers and stimulated other producers. Trade became regular and brought prosperity to those whose enterprise had made it possible.

Soon another step was taken. The superiority of Florentine cloth lay in its finish, not in its material or fabric. It was the finish that brought the profit, not the spinning and weaving which the Florentine had to do on even terms with others. As the demand for his cloth increased, the Florentine had the bright idea of buying the raw fabric from other towns and bringing it to Florence to be

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finished. He thus managed to concentrate his energies upon the more profitable part of the process. This meant more buying and selling, more transportation, more commerce. The packhorses were now loaded, going and coming, and Florence became busier and richer. Cloth was the great staple, but not the only one. The other crafts were stimulated and new ones came into being, until the city became the hive of industry that we find it. It is a profound change through which Florence and many another community is passing. The old barbaric simplicity and isolation are giving way to wealth and luxury, but at the expense of self-sufficiency and independence. Specialization and commerce are the necessary conditions to which the ampler life owes its precarious existence.

But no old order changes giving place to new without protest and opposition. The present case is no exception. The trouble is that the new order has turned things upside down. The new wealth has not accrued to the markgraves and petty lordlings in the hilltop castles but has quietly passed them by. A set of new leaders, men of great energy and foresight but without title or imperial warrant, have been directing the new movement and acquiring its emoluments. This is galling enough, but when the serf runs away from the lordling's estate to seek employment in the crafts of the town, the grievance is obvious. The old and new order are at feud.

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Unfortunately there has been occasion for daily friction. The castles stood by the highway along which passes the packhorse, to and fro, with the wares of Florence. An old right based on a vague duty of protection entitled the owner to levy toll on the passing traffic. Here was an opportunity to intercept his share of the profits, an opportunity which we may assume that he has not always used with moderation. Even the traditional levy becomes exorbitant when the commerce has increased a hundred fold. Yet what castle owner could see it so? Equally, what merchant could see it otherwise? As commerce, now furnishing its own protection, asks naught of the lord, his service has become negligible and his charges extortionate. Friction has led to blows and finally to a definite policy of extermination. The Florentines have attacked the castles one by one, captured them, and put an end to their odious exactions. It was a harsh policy but not unprovoked, and carried through, on the whole, with moderation. The Florentines have not killed their enemies or imprisoned them, or even confiscated their property. They have aimed simply to remove their obstruction.

But victory, as so often happens, has had its embarrassments. What should be done with these beaten enemies, men not the most progressive, if you will, but men of wealth and prestige and above all, men who bear the emperor's warrant? Their enmity is inevitable. Left to themselves, they would

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certainly conspire against Florence. The situation is complicated by the fact that other cities are undergoing the same transformation as Florence and are mortally jealous of her. In principle they have no more in common with these bearers of the emperor's warrant than Florence, but that does not prevent them from welcoming their alliance against the hated rival. Indeed Siena and others have already begun to shout for the emperor in anticipation.

The Florentines have seen all this, and realizing that it would not do to permit so dangerous an alliance, they have decided that these beaten enemies must come and live in Florence where they can keep watch of them. It is a hazardous expedient, however necessary. Suppose France had insisted as a condition of peace that Ludendorf and Hindenburg and a few thousand Junkers should come and live in Paris. What an interesting social and political situation it would have produced!

The Tuscan Junkers have come and built their high houses as nearly as possible like the castles they have left. Their neighbors have done the same. The city was crowded already and eligible building sites are few and close together. The houses of opposing factions were often within speaking distance, and from windows or tower or fighting battlement their owners could exchange those amenities which prepare the way for the scenes we have witnessed on our arrival. The lesser folk gradually

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have lined up on the one side or the other as personal interest or private grudge might dictate. The original cause of division is largely forgotten, being replaced by private feuds, business rivalries, political grievances, and the like, but the emperor and his inevitable counterpart, the pope, still serve as slogans for factions that have not the least regard for their interests and who would equally resent their dictation. After enduring this for a century, the Florentines have concluded that their clemency has been mistaken. They have expelled the Ghibellines, confiscated their property, even torn down their houses, and branded them as traitors.

But it is one thing to expel the Ghibellines and quite another to exorcise the spirit which they brought with them. Private feuds now seam the life of Florence in every direction. True, all can now shout for the pope—though with the Ghibellines gone it isn't so very exciting—but the Florentines continue to quarrel about pretty much everything else. Indeed, the spirit of faction is far too pervasive to be charged to the account of a few Junkers. Mediaeval Florence has awakened from her long sleep and has become the center of that modern life which we call industry. Infinitely more live and creative, life has become, infinitely better worth while, perhaps we should say, for the change is very much to our liking, but with it has come the microbe of turbulence and unrest. With the expulsion of the Ghibellines the last remnants of the

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Junker aristocracy have disappeared, and now the powerful families of the new order are trying, singly and in groups, to devise a form of government which shall be adapted to a people whose dominant characteristic is that they do not wish to be governed at all. A beginning has indeed been made, and under such a mayor as we began with in this year of our Lord, 1300, the government was a force to be reckoned with. He was a man of uncommon parts, this gonfalonier or standard bearer, one Alghieri by name, more familiarly known as Dante; but Florence has proved to be too much even for him, and he is now in exile.

But there are not a few indications that farther changes are impending. Florence is growing tired of herself. It is not so very long since, in one of those street forays already referred to, one partisan carried the matter to a disastrous excess by setting fire to the shop of a hated rival when the wind was high. The flames spread to neighboring shops and soon a whole quarter was in ashes. The flames even laid hold of a church in their path which was packed, according to the custom of the time, with waxen images of worthy burghers who, careful for their souls' salvation, had commended themselves to their patron saint by these tangible reminders of their importance. With impartial fury the fire consumed the fruits of industry and the emblems of piety alike. There was many an impoverished Florentine that night who, while not questioning the natural

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and inalienable right of men to have their feuds and to fight them out on occasion, queried whether it was not possible to have too much of a good thing and whether some authority should not be established to umpire the game and keep the contestants inside the ring. The malady is working out its own cure. Industry has bred independence, and this has resulted in turbulence and disorder. But industry has created wealth, and wealth now as always is crying out for order and protection. The man who owns property has given bonds to keep the peace which is one of the best of reasons why no man should be wholly disinherited.

And now once more we will withdraw from the busy scene and give Florence a century and a half to work out her own salvation.

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V

It is with a mingled sense of familiarity and change that we enter this city of the mid-fifteenth century. The Florentines have not been idle, if we may judge by the vast marble churches whose sculptured facades and slender campanili and towering domes look down upon the tallest towers of the old castle houses and dwarf the quaint old cathedral of St. John which used to seem so imposing. Even the old cathedral, though superseded, has gotten a sheathing of marble and new doors, such doors as the sun never saw before since it made the rounds of the planet. The castle houses, though still here, most of them, are a good deal remodeled, and upon such of the towers as remain, where of old were kept the handy piles of stone for warlike use, are now seen flower pots and clothes lines that point to a decay of martial spirit. And noting this, we are reminded that we have seen no battles in the streets and that certain functionaries stationed there show signs of interfering with those who would carry their disputes beyond the point of wordy altercation.

As our walk takes us into the more spacious streets we observe that many of the old narrow battlemented houses have disappeared and that their

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place has been taken by vast palaces whose cut-stone fronts and rich overhanging cornices and spacious doorways are but elegant reminiscences of the stern castles which they have superseded. Evidently wealth has increased in the interval, as these spacious structures with their prodigal occupancy of precious space, attest, and yet not universally, if we may judge by what we see in less favored streets. Here again workmen swarm as of old, but not all have bettered their condition in this palace building era. It is even rumored that a young man cannot start now, as once he could, by earning skill and outfit for himself; but that it has become customary to borrow money for the outfit from certain persons who make a specialty of such loans, and that the relations thus established are often long continued and sometimes irksome. We wonder how these less favored citizens get along with their affluent neighbors who live in the big houses in the broad streets. Does the old method of drawing the name of the gonfalonier by lot from a representative list of citizens still persist? If so, there must be awkward predicaments sometimes when an artisan bears rule over the millionaire to whom he is in debt for his tools.

But it is plain that we are novices. We are told that no such embarrassment occurs. Chance has willed for a long time that the name drawn should be that of a well-to-do citizen more or less experienced in public affairs, a citizen, too, in uniform

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agreement with the ruling policy and spirit of the republic. Just why this happy discrimination of change, no one seems to know. Perhaps Providence guides the choice according to the old and somewhat discredited view; or, as the less reverent have been known to suggest, something may have happened to the names in the box. No one seems to know, and, stranger still, no one seems greatly to care. We are told that it does not amount to so much to be gonfalonier as it once did, and that people care less about it now that the really important questions are decided by Cosimo.

Cosimo! Here is a new name. Evidently we have found a clew that it will pay us to follow up. The inquiry leads us back a long way, almost back to the time of our former visit. And this, in brief, is the result.

Cosimo is the head of a very old and wealthy family, one of the families, indeed, that were living in the high towered houses at the time of our former visit. It was a family of humble origin, however, boasting no imperial warrant or blue blood, and less inclined than some others to forget its plebeian affinities. The foundations of its fortunes had been laid in the not very highly regarded business of pill selling, and so, in default of our handy device of family names, they are known as the pillsellers, or Medici. It is, to be sure, a very long time since they have done any pillselling, so long, indeed, that the name, associated with their later and greater doings,

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has acquired a new meaning, but they seem no wise ashamed of it, and even decorate their new coat of arms with pills. Like many another Florentine family, they have lent their surplus capital on favorable terms, rather against the rules of the church, to be sure, which forbid the taking of interest, but in this case as in so many others, the church has been mistaken in its judgment of business ethics, and the pillsellers see it. Unlike most wealthy families, however, the pillsellers have specialized in a line of business investment commonly regarded as precarious. They seem never to have lost touch with the humbler classes out of whose ranks they have arisen, and while others have sought borrowers of means, who could give tangible security for their loan, the pillsellers early began to choose promising young men, and start them in business with only a character security. Sometimes, of course, they have lost, but probably no oftener than the others. Moreover, their protégées are likely to be business clients for the rest of their lives, and to recognize a debt of gratitude long after the other debt has been paid.

Little by little this informal money lending has grown into banking. In common with other wealthy families, the pillsellers have elaborated that great science which, more than any other, lies at the foundation of modern industry. They have helped to bring about the coinage of the golden florin; they have devised bills of exchange to save transporting

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money; they have undertaken the safe keeping of other peoples' money, and, finding that they can count on large sums pretty constantly from that source, they have loaned it on interest. Their transactions have grown to immense proportions, and they have become the creditors of kings, not neglecting, meanwhile, the promising youth whose interests they could safely promote, and who will be likely to be a staunch Medicin, a pillsellerite, forever afterward, in consequence of their assistance. The pillsellers, you see, are good business men gifted with unfailing good sense, and favored with uninterrupted good fortune, for the two are not greatly different.

But the pillsellers are more than business men. From a very early date they have shown a large interest in public affairs. Before the days of Dante, a pillseller was gonfalonier of Florence. But for the most part, they do not seem to have been aspirants for office. They are merely influential citizens whose word carries weight simply because they show unerring judgment in questions of public policy. Their supremacy has rested from the first simply upon their record of sagacity and wisdom, the most legitimate of all possible titles to power. Nor is there reason to doubt their disinterestedness as such things go. Of course they have been guided largely by their own business interests, but they sincerely believe that the general interest is identical with their own, and, as matters stand, they have been essen-

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tially correct. The fact that a man gains by a given policy does not prove that he is selfish in supporting it. Who is a manufacturer and does not believe that the welfare of the nation depends on the policy of protection? Who is a receiver of a fixed salary and does not feel that it would be disastrous to lessen the purchasing power of money? The pillsellers are human and judge public interests by their own; but they have judged broadly and wisely, and Florence has found her interest in following their judgment.

For two generations now, this guidance of public affairs has been their dominant function. A certain John the pillseller, through his long life, acquired a reputation so great that deference to his judgment became a habit. Almost without knowing it, he became the responsible head of the state, and found himself compelled to do what was doubtless sufficiently to his liking, namely, to organize a compact body of supporters, thwart opposition, and become responsible not only for suggesting, but for executing, the policy of the government. Something of the sort, of course, the pillsellers had done already, but the policy of the pillsellers now took more definite shape. Loans were placed systematically where they would win an adherent or embarrass an opponent. Nothing did so much to disarm an irreconcilable as to get a mortgage on his property. If he could not be induced to become a debtor, he suddenly found his competitors underselling him, presumably because they were obtaining funds on more favorable

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terms than he. Careful planning predetermined the results of popular elections. In all this there was doubtless much that would not bear the light. There is apt to be in practical politics. It is perhaps only fair to remember that the opponents thus silenced were often selfish, shortsighted, and demagogic; that the methods used against them were perfectly acceptable to them; that no agreement on a wise policy could have been effected by purely rational means; and finally and above all, that the policy adopted was, in general, wise and just, that no effort was made to rob the state for private ends, and that Florence prospered under the new régime. As the representative of wealth the new management was the uncompromising foe of disorder and anarchy. Private feuds smouldered low, street riots were suppressed, justice was meted out in the courts, and industry prospered in all her goings. John the pillseller was no idealist, though he had his ideals. He took men as he found them, never asking the impossible of them, playing off their meannesses and sordid passions against one another, and giving to each the incentive suited to his nature. He was no reformer, no zealot. He strove to make a working arrangement with the material at hand. He was disinterested and sagacious beyond the measure of most. It was with not a little anxiety and regret that the Florentines laid him to rest, full of years and of honors, not knowing what would be the outcome under the leadership of the youthful grandson,

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Cosimo, who was to succeed to his fortune and his responsibilities.

It was indeed a perilous moment for the untried youth, for the opposition, always powerful, now saw its opportunity. A swift alliance of rivals in business and politics headed by men of ability and decision, overthrew the established order, and gave Florence new masters. Cosimo was thrown into prison, and his friends scattered. A part of the new cabal urged his execution, but that conscience which doth make cowards of us all was too much for these men, who were by no means dead to traditions of honor, and exile was decreed instead.

Now the sagacity of the pillsellers became apparent. Suddenly the little traders and artisans of Florence found that the peoples' bank could no longer extend to them the accustomed accommodation. Banks with other affiliations would not, and, for a time, could not, take its place. Above all the new rulers could not at once create a constituency of men who owed to them their business existence. The new rulers had certain powerful business interests behind them, but the people gravitated to the side of the family which had so conspicuously identified its fortunes with the interests of humble citizens. Even big business was sensitive to any injudicious move in public policy. There was brief but sullen acquiescence in the new order of things, during which the new leaders vied with their predecessors in sagacity and statesmanship. But

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the first slip produced a clamor, a demonstration, then a revolution ending in the recall of Cosimo and the expulsion of his enemies.

The young man returned in state and with a following that increased as he approached, until when he entered Florence, his retinue was that of a prince. Humility was not his characteristic but his head was not turned. He set to work with the utmost energy to restore the working efficiency of the organization and to entrench its power. The first thing was to fix the box of names from which the officers were drawn by lot, for it must be remembered that all this time the pillsellers and their chief supporters held no office. The box of names once fixed—by perfunctory but perfectly regular popular vote—this has since given no trouble. The offices have been apportioned to faithful and docile men who are gratified by the semblance of power and are willing loyally to obey orders. Such arrangements are not unknown in other times, but my impression is that they seldom work quite so smoothly as under Cosimo. Affairs of state have been managed with the same sagacity and public spirit as before, as the growing power and broadening influence of Florence attest.

The family fortunes, too, have not been neglected, and Cosimo has found that things come decidedly his way. Not only has the bank prospered in common with the city, but new sources of profit have opened. There are chances for foreign loans, and

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what could be more natural than that these loans should be placed with a bank which has so much power to insure Florentine friendship? Cosimo has known how to turn everything to hand, weaving the gossamer web of debt about states and princes, until they are helpless in the toils of his subtle diplomacy. Not that diplomatic ends ever blind him to the importance of getting good interest, but he possesses the rare faculty of killing two birds with every stone he throws. There was not long since a great council of the empire up at Constance at which the emperor presided over grave discussions of theology, the principal result of which was the burning of one more heretic. Cosimo was present as a pillar of the orthodox party—Cosimo and his kind are always orthodox—and incidentally he arranged a loan with the ever impecunious emperor on which he cleared several million florins. It is all right enough. He is sincere in his orthodoxy, even if it is not the thing he lies awake nights to think about. There are those who have the real microbe who do not have it very hard. Meanwhile Cosimo has been false to no trust reposed in him. The citizens of Florence knew that he would return with added wealth and prestige, and they felt sure that both would accrue to their benefit, and they were right.

But there has been a new development in pill-seller policy. Florence has grown rich, and habits have changed accordingly. Men need much guidance in making money, but they need much more

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in spending it. It suits both the tastes and the interests of Cosimo to assume the leadership of Florence in the formation of those tastes and habits which are the necessary condition of wealth's doing us any good. Florence in her wealth getting has been as materialistic and parvenu as any American city, and she owes it in no small degree to this wonderful family that she has become cultured as well as rich. Cosimo is admirably fitted to lead in this new development. He is shrewd and sagacious, but he loves beauty, culture, refinement—in short the higher things of life. It is his pleasure to patronize learning and art, and he has done so discriminatingly. No man can ever successfully teach men to love the best things unless he himself loves them. Equally free from asceticism and voluptuousness, he has played admirably the role which fortune has assigned him.

But it has also been good policy. There were disappointed and sullen rivals in Florence who might have nursed dangerous ambitions. There were still those who remembered that Florentines were once free and who aspired to be liberators. Nothing could be more desirable than to turn these dangerous rivalries into new channels, and to substitute culture ideals for political ideals as the goal of private ambition. So Cosimo has adopted the policy of Pisistratus and Pericles and with even greater success. We are amazed at his liberality and the wide range of his interests. The chief sculptors and

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painters have all been in his employ. His agents in Constantinople have standing orders to buy at any price any Greek manuscript that comes upon the market. In some cases scholars have been given a standing account at the bank and their drafts honored at sight. Think of it, you whose devotion to the cause of learning has laid upon you a vow of poverty! It is easy to understand that art flourishes, for back of this boundless liberality is discrimination, devotion, real interest. And the spirit has been contagious. New rivalries have brought new gifts, and have forced with hothouse rapidity the aesthetic development of a singularly aesthetic people. It is with the consciousness of a great task greatly accomplished that Cosimo looks back over a life now drawing to its close. The murmurings have died away and the jealousies have been smothered under the growing sense of the splendor of his achievement. In the same grave with his beloved Donatello, there in front of the high altar of San Lorenzo, he has asked to be buried, where a grateful people will soon write upon the marble above him: "Cosimo, Pater Patriae."

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VI

It is with eager expectancy that we return, after a brief generation, to this center of brimming life. Things must have happened since we left. In a situation so tense, with life so dynamic, and an equilibrium so delicate, the life of Florence can not have remained uneventful.

We are not to be disappointed. The march of events has been at quickened pace in the interval and centuries have been packed into a lifetime. Cosimo has passed as was foreseen, as has his talented and worthy son, after all too brief an experience of his admirable management. Once more the fortunes of family and state have been confided to a youth, the incomparable Lorenzo. It speaks much for the record of this wonderful family that at the age of twenty this youth should have been formally requested by a deputation of representative citizens to take the direction of Florentine affairs. If our knowledge of the all powerful organization which holds Florence in its grip somewhat tempers the significance of this expression of confidence, it must be remembered that Lorenzo has already won his spurs at the age of sixteen in a difficult diplomatic mission to the court of Milan which he discharged

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with consummate ability. With becoming modesty but with legitimate confidence, therefore, he has accepted the inevitable commission.

The burden has not grown lighter with the years nor has the new leadership passed unchallenged. It is significant, however, of the change wrought by the genius of Cosimo that the opposition encountered by Lorenzo has come, not from rival Florentines but from rival states. He early found it necessary to thwart the pope in an ambitious scheme of state-building which he deemed inimical to Florentine interests. The pope thereupon entered into a conspiracy with certain disaffected Florentines to kill both Lorenzo and his brother. It is characteristic of the times that the arch-conspirator in such a scheme should have been the pope, that his local manager should have been the archbishop of Florence, that the person chosen to strike the blow should have been a priest, that the place chosen should have been a church and the occasion selected the celebration of high mass. Characteristic of the times, I say, not of the church. Such means are as repugnant to the Vatican now as to ourselves, but the age had not outgrown the earlier tradition of violence, and institutions are seldom wholly exempt from the spirit of the age.

The plot failed in its main object. The brother was killed but Lorenzo escaped. Then Florence, the old-time Guelf stronghold and chief partisan of the pope, broke forth in fury at this attack upon

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her national independence. Divining the source of the attack, she hung the archbishop by the neck from his palace window. His Florentine accomplices were hunted and exterminated. Popular fury raved itself out.

The pope was furious but dissembling. While disclaiming complicity in the plot, he demanded that Florence expel the Medici, and when this was refused, he excommunicated the whole city. Though gravely handicapped by the ban, the Florentines had no thought of yielding. Soon Florence found herself confronted by a powerful coalition of states which she was unable to resist. The war went steadily against her and she seemed on the brink of ruin, when Lorenzo took one of those great resolves that are the privilege of genius. Unarmed and alone he embarked at Leghorn, and sailed to Naples, the capital of the most perfidious of his foes. He was still young, sickly, and homely to look upon, but he knew his power. He knew that the very perfidy of the king made it easy to detach him from the alliance, if he could see his interest in betraying his allies. We shall never know the secret of that encounter between coarse self interest and subtle intellect. We can but guess what were the arguments used, what the nameless charm by which this most gifted of Florentines drew the toils around his clumsy antagonist. Suffice it to say that when Lorenzo disembarked again at Leghorn, he bore with him the document, signed and sealed, of an

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alliance with the King of Naples. This threw the balance heavily on the side of Florence and made peace inevitable. The pope, again baffled, was at the end of his resources.

Imagine what the Florentines think of this wonderful youth, risking his life in a self-assumed role, saving his country in a bloodless encounter, and snatching the laurels from heads grown gray in scheming and diplomacy. Lorenzo's throne has ever since been the firmest in Europe. Every subsequent move has confirmed his power. The other states have found themselves entangled in the meshes of diplomacy, played off against one another, till independent action has become impossible. Florence is the arbiter of Italy.

And now the Medicean policy has received the further development that changing circumstances and the personality of Lorenzo require. The functions of the great head of the house have become more avowedly public. He is more completely busied with affairs of state and less free to attend to his own. Inevitably the family fortune has suffered, partly from neglect, more from the heavier outlay required by the princely role which the genius of the family has created. The splendor of the throne is inseparable from its grandeur and power. Insensibly the royal function of the family has become a charge upon the state. Doubtless definite items were first charged to public account—items easily justified in connection with definite services—then more and

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vaguer items, and finally a princely income is now systematically diverted into the family coffers. Technically this is embezzlement, for Lorenzo is in name only a private citizen. But in fact he is a prince, and his functions wholly public. His services are indubitable and his resources inadequate. The laborer, it may be argued, is worthy of his hire. But it is a weakness that the laborer can show no regular credentials and has to be paid on the sly. The present is a moment of transition from citizenship to kingship, a moment in which neither the ethics nor the mechanism of finance is sufficiently elaborated to suit the occasion. How can he enter the field of competitive business with any fairness to his private rivals? Yet how can he meet his enormous responsibilities in default of the income which he is thus forbidden to secure? It is a difficult situation in which transactions that seem necessary and just to the sympathetic are sure to wear the ugly guise of theft to the envious and unreconciled. It is a delicate matter for an unofficial public servant to determine his own remuneration and help himself from the public chest without treasury warrant or audit for his account. It is not clear that Lorenzo has proved equal to the requirement. It is a complicated question, not easy to settle, and we may as well wait till the judgment day.

But it is in the new role of art patron and culture leader of Florence that Lorenzo has attained his highest eminence. Liberal by nature and now

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having the resources of a rich state at his disposal, his patronage of art has become most munificent. But the patronage of art means more than the spending of money. Great as is the power of wealth, it can as easily hinder as help the cause of culture. It all depends on what you spend your money for. Lorenzo is in his tastes a refined Epicurean. For him puritanism and asceticism have no attractions. But the spirit of indulgence is in him so tempered by refinement and good taste that it seldom wears the ugly aspect of vice or sensuality. The coarser lusts are to him not so much wicked as vulgar and inartistic. Good taste will go a long way toward doing the work of conscience, and it is the corner stone of Lorenzo's character. Under his subtle leadership the Florentine love of pleasure has grown into a beauty cult, in which art flourishes as it has flourished but once before in human history. Himself a poet and scholar of no mean attainments, Lorenzo never mistakes an artist, a philosopher, a scholar. His dreamy eye unerringly detects beauty in all its forms, distinguishing the true from the false, the fundamental from the local and temporary, the beautiful from the whimsical, the sensational, and the clever. Around his table and living upon his bounty sit the most remarkable group of men—scholars, poets, philosophers, artists—ever gathered under a single roof. By what magic does he hold these independent spirits in leash? By what divination has he foreseen their unrevealed possibilities?

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And who but the inscrutable Lorenzo would have taken into his home and into his intimate favor this unprepossessing youth, Michelangelo?

Shallow criticism finds an easy mark in the great magician. It is easy to point out his shortcomings, to note his disparagement of austere righteousness, his compromises with conscience, his too complacent acceptance of the foibles of men which he understands so well how to manipulate for his purpose. It is not so easy to estimate his services to public order or the value of that ideal of beauty which to the many is not yet revealed.

None the less there are ominous signs that the brilliant régime of the Medici has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. Criticism, momentarily hushed as the great Magnifico lies upon his death bed, has of late grown menacing. The impetus which circumstance and genius have given to the great culture movement has spent itself, and the lassitude that follows strenuous exertion is manifesting itself in signs of restiveness and reaction. The neo-pagan culture is no longer a novelty and is going out of fashion.

But there are deeper reasons for reaction, reasons long held in leash, but now released by the changing temper. The cult of pleasure which has impelled the few of the noblest flights of fancy and the highest inspiration, has meant for many the complacent ratification of passion. The subtle philosophy of revised Platonism, with all its lofty idealism, has

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wrought havoc with the simple faith that once kept men in the fear of the Lord. Right and wrong, become matters of taste, have lost their cogency to the minds of the many who see in matters of taste only personal liking and caprice. Undeniably the urbanity of the times hides much that is unsightly in private life. Even in the church and the cloister culture and intellectual subtlety have taken the place of devotion and chastening of spirit.

This growing murmur of criticism has recently burst into a storm of protest in the voice of a terrible monk whose preaching is now the sensation of Florence. Recently appointed prior of San Marco, one of the most complacent of Medicean strongholds, he has effected an almost immediate revolution. The artistic diletterantism, the mundane philosophizing, and political scheming of this modernized cloister have given place to systematic devotion and the stern régime of St. Dominic. It is easy to imagine the mutterings, perhaps even the plottings and incipient revolts encountered by so drastic a reform, but opposition vanishes in the presence of this terrible man who, with all his inflexibility, is infinitely compassionate and persuasive, and whose blameless life silences the cavils of the few who resist his magic spell. Touched by his transforming eloquence the forgotten ideals of monk and Christian have again become glorious and fire the imaginations of men. For it must not be forgotten that Florence is still at heart profoundly superstitious, that this humanist

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culture which has been her pride, is a hothouse growth, and one by no means acclimated to the persistent conditions about it; finally, that the long emphasis upon the aesthetic to the disparagement of the ethical and religious has prepared men for reaction, while new and strange portents are appearing upon the political horizon.

In these conditions the mission of Savonarola is as fire in dry stubble when the wind is high. The age-long superstition of the people is with him a passion. He believes not only in God and conscience, but in dreams and portents, in miracles and divine intervention in immediate and concrete forms. The vision of a flaming sword is a prophesy of war and disaster; the coming of the French king is no political accident but a divine judgment. To the noblest spirits he appeals by his lofty ideals of purity and his unflinching self-abnegation, while to the base and sordid he seems to promise the fulfillment of vindictive desires and the gratifications of a sensuous heaven. The great image is part of gold and part of iron and part of clay, and each finds in it after his kind. Savonarola and Lorenzo, as they reach out for the multitude, have much more in common than they realize, but in their appeal and seeming purpose they are the most absolute of irreconcilables. Savonarola, ascetic, narrow, intense, absolutely believing in popular government, yet unconscious that his power to manipulate the assembly lies at the root of his belief, stands for conscience, self-denial, purity

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and fervid religious faith. Lorenzo, refined, subtle, calculating, profoundly distrustful of popular judgments, and trusting in the discipline and shrewdness of the chosen circle of which he is the master spirit, stands for culture, beauty, subtlety, and intellect. The cleverest of politicians is pitted against the most uncompromising of prophets.

Savonarola has from the first numbered many of Lorenzo's chosen circle among his listeners, and his sermons are the subject of not unsympathetic discussion at the table of the Magnifico. But philosophic tolerance can not blink the fact that his denunciation of the existing régime, and even of the Medici by name, is subversive in the extreme. Lorenzo, too generous as well as too subtle to play the tyrant, has no thought of silencing his antagonist. But he is none the less alive to the necessity of warding off this new danger to Florence and to the uncertain Medicean succession. He must counteract what he may not check. In the battle of wits and of personality he has never yet been worsted, and the battle is on. We recognize the first skirmish in the eloquent counter preaching in San Lorenzo where the divine message comes clothed in all the beauty of the Renaissance. A year ago it would have packed the church but today it is unheeded.

The case is serious and one not to be handled by indirection. The master will try his hand. Soon the equanimity of San Marco is upset as never before. Breathless with excitement the monks an-

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nounce to Savonarola: "Lorenzo is in the Garden." "Has he inquired for me?" "No." "Well, then don't disturb him at his devotions!"

Whatever the clever move that the far-seeing Lorenzo may have planned, however sincere may be his desire to reach an understanding with the stern monk, this refusal to treat, refusal even to meet, makes understanding impossible. We await with absorbing interest the further moves of the master player.

But we await in vain. The player is stricken and the feeble frame that has so long trammelled the potent spirit has at last refused its halting service. Even the spell of the great preacher is forgotten as Florence awaits in awed silence the news from that death-bed at Carreggi where the soul of a great age is passing. And the news has come. Amplified by busy rumor and perhaps recast in the poetic mold of myth, that final scene epitomizes the great conflict.

Confronted by the great change which had now declared itself imminent, the thoughts of the dying man were disquieting and brought reaction of spirit. There were haunting spectral visions of God as the great avenger of wrong-doing which, in this moment, no beauty worship could lay. The deepening sense of disloyalty and the need of reconciliation came to him as it has come to so many when the flames of passion have died out and conscience sits solitary among the embers.

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Then the monk, who alone had never fawned or flattered, seemed the one to help him in his hour of need. Perhaps, too, there was the consciousness of the struggle which he was bequeathing to his headstrong son, and the hope that the monk might find in reconciliation with himself a pathway to reconciliation with his house. Men seldom act from wholly simple motives, and even in death can not ignore the habits that have ruled their lives.

Called into the august presence, the monk asked wherefore he had been bidden. "To shrive my soul," said the dying man. "That I will do on three conditions." "What are they?" "First, that you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior." To this Lorenzo gave immediate assent. We may question whether the phrase was very meaningful to one who had spent a lifetime in philosophic skepticism; but like Savonarola, we can hardly do otherwise than take him at his word. "And the second condition?" "That you restore all monies illegally taken from Florence." Lorenzo knew what that meant. Savonarola was not one who saw in the role of Medici a justification for the income they had taken from the state. To him, as the Medicean rule was plain usurpation, so the Medicean appropriation of funds was plain theft. We may well imagine how the feeble pulse quickened as Lorenzo contemplated the bankruptcy of his family as a condition of his salvation. But if so heavy a price could insure

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his soul's peace, and possibly the immunity of his house from further attack by this implacable foe, it might be worth the sacrifice. Long was the pause and very different the assent of this sorely troubled spirit, but at last the assent was given. "Third," said the terrible monk, "you must give back to Florence her liberties." This time there was no struggle, no hesitation. Lorenzo turned his face to the wall and died unshriven.

The story is told with hushed voice and the mingled awe and sympathy of the crowd is rarely broken by the note of exultation. Yet it is impossible to overlook the fact that the monk has scored another victory. He has refused to shrive the greatest and most powerful of Florentines, and Lorenzo has died unshriven. Vaguely the crowd see in the encounter the triumph of uncompromising righteousness over stricken and despairing sin.

But there are those who would fain see in this final silence another meaning. The dying lips never gave up their secret, but if they could have spoken, might they not have said something like this: "I accept the shadowy faith you offer, as a man may do who has spent his life in a struggle with realities and in the impartial contemplation of speculative thought. I even sacrifice fortune and family as atonement for wrongs more nominal than real. I make no mention of services that might seem to justify my emoluments. I see no plain case of theft, as you do, monk; but the title is not clear and

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conscience shall have the benefit of the doubt, even though ruin be the result. Myself I sacrifice and those that I may call my own.

"But give back to Florence her liberties! Do you know what that means, O monk? Are you unmindful of the passions that ran riot in the streets, of the war of factions, the chronic feuds, the chaos in industry, in government, in religion, in private life? Was it for naught that the strong arm took the helm when the ship was sore bested? The liberty of Florentines; what is it but the privilege of anarchy, chaos and murder? It is easy for you, wrought upon by fastings and visions in the night, to exhort to righteousness and reform. But think you that in a lifetime in which I have wrought to fashion a state from crude humanity as I found it, I have had no conscience, no thought for other's weal? You would make Florence into a heaven; I have saved Florence from being a hell, Take the price of my doing, just or unjust, but not the thing I have done. Shrive me not, O monk, if you will not. I appeal unto God."

The practical and the ideal; between these two there is no reconciliation, save in the finished work which their common effort has wrought. In this world of ours, there is instant need that something should be done with crude men and imperfect conditions. Somebody must take men as they are, appeal to them with arguments that they can under-

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stand, organize them for purposes that they can grasp, and appreciate. Selfish and coarse, they must be gratified, indulged, wheedled and cajoled. Envious, petty, and dull, they must be managed by hidden forces and hoodwinked into well doing. Endless compromise, patch work, and inconsistency enter into every working plan. There is much that defies the simple rules of right, much that will not bear the light, much that grates upon our sensibilities, in the workings of every party, every business, every church. There are no ideal organizations because there are no ideal people to organize. He who would be a doer of real things with real men must be a practical man; he must take men as they are.

But while we must take men as they are it must be with the unfailing purpose of making them what they ought to be. Take them as they are, or you will not take them at all. Make them what they ought to be or they are not worth the taking. This is the never-ceasing reminder of the idealist, to keep in sight the final goal.

Yet it is the fatality of human nature to separate and antagonize these two functions, either of which is worthless without the other. The practical man who takes men as they are, adjusting himself to their foibles and manipulating them for his ends, becomes very well content with them as they are. Broad plans for human regeneration disturb his working program and put him out of his reckonings.

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Insensibly but inevitably he becomes an obstacle to reform and progress. The idealist just as inevitably falls into the opposite error. Mistaking the ultimate ideal for a working program, he demands the impossible and sacrifices the feasible in an effort for the ideal. In the social order he demands absolute democracy, in business, conscious altruism and avowed stewardship, in politics only philanthropic organization and public-spirited, self-denying service. All this is good, but it is not a working program. If by impassioned eloquence majorities are won for these ideals, they melt before the resurging tide of human passion as the morning dew disappears before the sun. There is an infinite pathos in that solemn vote by which the Florentine people, under the leadership of the great idealist, at a regular municipal election, chose Jesus Christ for their king. Might not the most devout adherent of the older order have smiled at the simplicity of these children of the ideal?

And so the great struggle continues between the men of the moment and the men of the ideal. Misunderstood, dreaded, and hated of each other, they are none the less, useful only in cooperation. Neither can shrive the other's soul. Each must appeal unto God.

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VII

Since the death of Lorenzo, all eyes are turned upon Savonarola. There have been happenings, to be sure, in the great palace of the Medici, which at other times would have challenged attention. There has been the same delegation of responsible citizens, the same grave petition to the youthful heir, and the same well-phrased acceptance. There have been grave decisions, too, and grave mistakes, alas, which, added to the monk's denunciations, have exasperated the people and sent the rash Piero into exile. But of those who hurry past the deserted palace to plain San Marco, two blocks away, or later to the great cathedral, where the monk's wonderful voice swells and sobs through the hollow aisles, there are few who remember and less who regret the family whom they so recently delighted to honor. The monk is regarded with the most varied sentiments, but all unite in giving him the homage of engrossing attention. Almost inevitably, too, attention begets sympathy, devotion, adoration in degree suited to temperament. As these few brief years have confirmed his power, there are few who have resisted his spell. The opposition may say as of old: Behold how ye prevail nothing. Lo, the world is gone after him.

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Inquiry discloses nothing very startling in his earlier career. His parentage embodied the inherent contradictions of the Renaissance, the essence of that conflict in which he is playing so conspicuous a part. His father is remembered as a polished man of the world, one in whom religious conformity was perfunctory, an attitude of urbanity and good breeding toward honored convention, for the skepticism of the Renaissance is seldom militant. Conformity became easier as the church grew more complacent and less inclined to press its more irksome claims. A true humanist, all views and all principles had for him an academic interest, and none of them the force of conviction. To his tolerant and catholic spirit the harsh antithesis between duty and pleasure was one of the interesting austerities of an earlier ascetic age. Yet humanism does not deal wholly in negatives, and he found in the cult of beauty, taste, and learning, and in the refined pursuit of pleasure things worth living for.

To the mother this was the great void. In refinement and sensitiveness she was more than her husband's equal, but there seems to have been no place in her nature for the easy going indifference which was the keynote of his character. Devotion was with her a passion. Whatever her intellectual abilities, she seems to have felt no inclination to use them to dissect that which she loved. The imperious need of a God to worship and of a ritual language for the expressions of the emotions of her heart de-

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stroyed all impulse to make these the subject of analysis and inquiry. Above all she recoiled before lust and unhallowed pleasure in every form, and no decorum or disguise of decency reconciled her to its inherent ugliness.

What may have been the relations between these two life partners and what the relation of each to the son we can only imagine. Such contrasts are common in these closest relations, and they by no means preclude tender affection and permanent devotion. If the husband was true to the spirit of that culture which he accepted, he was tolerant of his wife's peculiarities and did not needlessly wound her by his conduct or his views. The wife had a much older warrant for fidelity and devotion. That each loved the son and sought in him the fulfillment of their hopes may be taken for granted. It is a matter of interesting appeal to the imagination what must have been the sentiments of this father when the son that he had destined for his own career of the law and his own place in the brilliant life of the day, suddenly and without his knowledge or consent took the vows of a monk. If death had blasted his hopes, he would have had our sympathy. How much more when the son not only failed him but repudiated and discredited his lifelong ideals. Even the mother may have questioned the wisdom of a step which, though much in the line of her sympathies, was at variance with her family loyalty.

The early years of Savonarola's life have been

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such as are called uneventful by observers who are unmindful of spiritual happenings. They have been years of preparation, yet preparation for an unknown future and one which he has hardly foreseen. They have been years of self-discipline, of ascetic devotion, and of apocalyptic exercise of a highly excitable imagination. He has joined a preaching order, but one whose original purpose has long been in abeyance, and he seems at first to have had no idea of his powers. These, indeed, were not manifest in his early efforts. His extreme sensitiveness is even yet an obstacle which he overcomes only by the most intense self-assertion.

But Savonarola has other abilities than those of the orator and abilities that were earlier manifest. He is a born leader of men, gifted with rare penetration into character and motive and with the power to inspire equally love and fear. He possesses the rare faculty of speaking in the imperative mode without shouting, and the gift, almost equally rare, of absolute decision. It is a testimony to the large appreciation of ability always shown by the marvelous Roman Catholic organization, that in this humanist age when the ideals of Savonarola command so little sympathy, he should have been advanced so rapidly to positions of leadership and power.

The death of Lorenzo, followed so soon by the collapse of his feeble successor, has left Savonarola the master of Florence. The position is one which

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he seems not to have sought and which it is doubtful if he even yet realizes. He has from the first espoused the cause of popular government and insisted upon the restoration of its machinery which, under the Medici, had quietly ceased to function. He seems to believe absolutely in the right and the ability of the people to determine their own government, but he noticeably attaches the greatest importance to their spiritual guidance in the performance of these functions, a fact which leads some to assert that his faith in the people is only a disguised faith in himself. Perhaps this faith is common to men who have large power of swaying others, and common, too, an element of unconsciousness and self-deception.

Savonarola, therefore, has bent all energies to the restoration of the popular government and the elaboration of its machinery. A great council now deliberates on legislative measures—not a little assisted by pronouncements from the pulpit of the Duomo—and a smaller body is charged with the duties of administration.

It is but fair to say that this government seems to be giving a good account of itself. We can hardly wonder that those experienced in government affairs should have contemplated with anxiety, almost with dismay, this accession to power of a people now for nearly a century without experience. Nor was the denunciatory preaching of the monk whose ascendancy was now inevitable, calculated to reassure them.

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There was ground to fear a rule of fanatics, and a policy of violence and reprisal. These men, however, if not wholly reassured, confess that their worst fears have not been realized. The personnel of the government, while sympathetic toward the monk and favoring his program of reform, is for the most part sane, and the soberer elements are in the ascendant. There are those who are sanguine enough to suggest that Piero Soderini, if he can hold things steady until extravagance has spent its force, perhaps until the monk has disappeared, may give to Florence an admirable government.

But even the monk has shown remarkable restraint in connections where trouble was expected. He has stood like a rock against all vindictive proposals on the part of the malcontents who have been attracted by his unsparing denunciations, and now the Mediceans themselves look to him for protection. To the Medicean, accustomed to compromise and payment for services rendered, nothing is so remarkable about Savonarola as his stern opposition to the rapacity and vindictiveness of those who have helped raise him to power.

But if Savonarola shows mercy toward his fallen adversaries, he shows none toward the vices that they tolerated or the ideals they entertained. The aim of life is not beauty or pleasure, but righteousness and harmony with the divine will. Compared with these great ends, how trivial is the round of ephemeral pleasures on which our starveling humanity subsists.

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Savonarola does not forget that this establishment of the reign of righteousness must begin with the regeneration of the individual. For this purpose he uses those spiritual forces which in all ages have been recognized as legitimate in the service of religion, fervent exhortation with appeals to divine compassion and divine retribution, the whole enforced by the example of devotion and a blameless life. No man has ever surpassed Savonarola in the power of this appeal. There are those who criticize his appeal to the lower motives and still more who judge him extreme in his condemnation of vanities and innocent pleasures. There are even those who see a fault in his unmeasured appeal to the higher impulses. Inspired by his example and carried away by his hypnotic power, men are led on to heights of self-renunciation and to an ultra purification of life which neither their own powers nor even his continued influence will enable them to maintain. The Medicean temperament instinctively feels that the reformer who overstrains human nature, like the builder who overstrains his beams and girders, will see his work go down in collapse.

But for the moment, Florentine nature, reinforced by his wonderful example and his ever repeated appeal, still stands the strain. It is wonderful to what an extent private life has been transformed. Not only the unsightly vices but even the frivolities and vanities of life have been put away. Mischievous instincts that can not be wholly repressed

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are even harnessed to the work of regeneration, as witness these boys who, not long since, went about in white robes and with well conned phrases of the new order, claimed the false hair, the ribbons, and the rouge pots for the great bonfire in the piazza. What a chance for a boy!

But we must not judge this work of personal regeneration by picturesque incidents like this. It is agreed on all hands that the change is far-reaching and profound. Savonarola and his following are charged, not with levity or even with hypocrisy, but with excess of zeal. Nor is his following one of weaklings and women. It includes level heads like Soderini, and despite his hostility to art, not only serious spirits like Fra Bartolommeo, but Sandro Botticelli, and the taciturn Michelangelo are among his devoted adherents.

But Savonarola is nowise minded to stop with his work of personal regeneration. He is sagacious enough to perceive that men are very much the creatures of that social organization which they have themselves created. Individual reforms count for little until they are intrenched in a reformed society. For the children of God, there must be a kingdom of God.

From the first, therefore, Savonarola has launched his attack against iniquities in state and church. His prepossession in favor of popular government insured his uncompromising opposition to the Medicean régime, even had their administration been fault-

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less, for to his mind that régime was iniquitous in principle. It is interesting to speculate as to what would have been the result if this collision had occurred when the Medicean power was at its height under Cosimo or in Lorenzo's prime. But fate has willed that that power should collapse at the moment of Savonarola's attack, thus leaving the ground clear for the great experiment.

Success seems to have crowned the undertaking. The popular government has been established and able and earnest men have been found for its service. The drastic reform of private life has been followed by a like reform of the state. If this reform seems extreme as judged by prevailing standards, it fairly represents the new standards of Florentine private life and the will of the people. Given the new ideals which unquestionably dominate Florence, it is difficult to criticise the measures adopted or the means chosen for their enforcement.

But there are ominous signs that the movement has reached its limits and that a tragic change is impending. The initial impulse seems to have spent its force and the opposition is becoming more redoubtable.

There is the Medicean party. The family is gone, but their party, the party of big business and of practical politics, is here and irreconcilable. Not that all are seekers after place and privilege. There are many high minded and disinterested men among them, men who sympathize with the soberer part

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of Savonarola's program and are grateful for the protection which his powerful influence has accorded them. But these men see in Savonarola the only safeguard against the excesses and the vagaries of popular government, and this safeguard, in the nature of the case, can not be permanent. Without him what would the mob have done on the morrow of Piero's departure? What will the mob do on the morrow of Savonarola's disappearance? Savonarola will have no successor, and the mood of spiritual exaltation which his magic has created will not be self-perpetuating. Patriotism quite as much as selfishness prompts them to seize the reins and forestall a perilous interregnum.

More redoubtable is the hostility of the church. It is true that the church has always done lip service to Savonarola's ideals. It is from the church, indeed, that Savonarola's entire program is taken. Even his methods are such as have long enjoyed its sanction. Monk and prelate have no such reason for opposition as have the Medici, men of secular aims and worldly methods. But monk and prelate have found reasons, nevertheless, and their opposition is instinctive and uncompromising. There are the Franciscans, for instance, in their great stronghold of Santa Croce. Who that knows them can expect them to regard complacently this immense increase of Dominican influence? And who would hope that an archbishop, one appointed by the pope who tried to assassinate Lorenzo, would submit tamely to the

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absolute domination of his diocese by a belligerent monk? We need not lay too much stress upon the certainly low standards of church morality at this time to understand that conflict with reforming zeal is inevitable. Here too the opposition is not entirely selfish or base. Fear of the zealot is instinctive in all established organizations. The zealot is after all a disturber of the peace, and he takes a large contract when he engages that the good accomplished shall outweigh the harm.

Church and monastery are outside the pale of Savonarola's reforming legislation. They are not answerable to the local authorities, but only to Rome. Against their passive resistance persuasion and legislation are alike impotent. Nothing daunted, the intrepid monk launches his denunciations against monk and prelate, against even the pope himself. Ever seeking practical means to accomplish practical ends, he has written to the princes of Italy urging them to call a church council and depose a pope who bought his election.

It is all very logical, but all very desperate. The sanest of Savonarola's supporters can not help asking what is to be expected from a pope under such circumstances, especially from such a pope as Alexander Borgia. And what is to be hoped from the princes of Italy, men schooled in the prevailing political ethics and well informed as to the conditions which would govern a new papal election? If the Frate could preach to them, perhaps; but can he

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arouse their consciousness by a diplomatic note? These thoughts are not reassuring, and those who know pope Borgia do not expect him to be restrained by prudence or scruple. Savonarola is treading the way to the scaffold.

But there is a greater danger and a deeper tragedy. Savonarola himself has changed. Outwardly he is the same. There is the same blameless private life, the same devotion to the cause of humanity, and the same intrepidity of spirit. But in the heroic struggle of these six years, Savonarola has found himself in the grip of practical realities. That unswerving loyalty to principle which he had demanded so uncompromisingly in those early Medicean days has proved impracticable even under his all-powerful guidance. Hampered by a multitude of private interests, prejudices, and antipathies which no pulpit appeal could dispel, he has learned to wink at much which he once condemned and to choose the lesser evil. Threatened by faction and imperiled by opposition, his government has had to maintain a majority by complaisance and conciliation. A discreet silence has become necessary under circumstances where once the prophet would have spoken. Worse still, emergencies have arisen in which laws he had demanded for the protection of the individual against arbitrary power have had to be set aside. It simply had to be. Either the law must go for the moment, or the Medici would return and the law would go altogether. What friend of the Republic

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could hesitate before such an alternative? Yet what would he have said—nay, what did he say—six years ago, when the Medici did this very thing? Savonarola is far too keen and far too candid not to be conscious of this inconsistency. Yet he is too practical to throw away so much of substantial achievement for reasons which even his most sympathetic advisers must regard as inadequate. No, he will prefer the lesser to the greater sacrifice. Insensibly but remorselessly the exigencies of practical affairs have brought the prophet to his knees and he has bowed to the god of the Medici, *compromise*.

In vain he strives to avoid, to disguise, to forget the tragic surrender. He urges that he is but a private citizen and that it is for the official guardians of the state to decide, but he recalls that he has habitually influenced and can still influence their decision. Yes, but the reasons of expediency on which their decision is based are compelling. Alas, how often he has denounced this Medicean philosophy, and declared that governments based upon expediency were an abomination unto the Lord! But is the comparison fair? Is emergency action to be compared with habitual action? Is it not one thing to set aside the law in the interest of righteousness, and quite another to set it aside in behalf of private or party advantage? Sophistries, all; he half realizes it; but sophistries that do him honor.

But regardless of reasoning and anguish of spirit there stands necessity, pitiless, inexorable. These

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concessions must be made; Florence must be saved; the kingdom of righteousness must prevail.

Alas that redemption must be purchased at so heavy a price! Is it not enough that the redeemer should be crucified in the flesh? Must he also be tortured in conscience and crucified in the spirit? Has any man known real martyrdom until God has forsaken him?

These experiences have had their inevitable influence upon Savonarola's preaching. The heedless listener may hear the same wondrous voice, the same lofty appeal to purity and self-abnegation. But to those more subtly attuned there is a loss of the old assurance. If the eternal verities are asserted with the same old confidence, their local application is less frequent and positive. There are things questionable to the simple minded concerning which he is silent, even apologetic.

There is darkness over the land in these hours of the great tragedy. It is no peril of foreign invasion or burden of private trouble that turns all eyes toward the oracle. The faithful have loved long and deeply, and their solicitude in this dark hour is for the object of their devotion. The sole demand of love is the rehabilitation of the prophet. Surely he understands, and he will not leave them in darkness. Oh for one more message, one more clear utterance with the old-time assurance of one who has stood in the presence of the Eternal.

The message has come, the saddest ever wrung

A FLORENTINE REVERY

from a soul whose supreme effort had been to win a world to God and to righteousness. "Brethren, pray for me, for God hath removed from me the spirit of phophecy."

To those who sit among the stars and view from afar the turmoil of life, the movement reveals itself in broad and simple lines. The vast complex resolves itself into a few primal forces governed by clearly discernible principles. How easy from this vantage point to chart the course of life! How inspiring the confidence born of this privileged vision!

Within the turmoil this simplicity disappears. The primal forces, deflected by all manner of obstacles, complicated and overborne by counter forces are but intermittently discernible, often seemingly in abeyance. In this perplexing struggle with the local and the temporary, how inadequate, how positively misleading, even, is this prophet's chart of the eternal verities! When every hour some uncharted reef may bring disaster, what use to relax our vigilance in contemplating its impractical generalities! The vision fades and a narrow-horized opportunism becomes the rule of life. Yet to those who have once sat at the foot of God's throne and beheld the course of man's destiny stretch plain and straight toward its shining goal, there is no sacrifice like the loss of that vision.

